

## NOTES ON THE INNER TEMPLE GATE HOUSE

BY

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(A paper to be read, with lantern slides, before our  
Society.)

As long ago as the year 1900 a paper by me was published in vol. II of the *Home Counties Magazine*, then edited by the late Mr. W. J. Hardy, on the house extending over the Inner Temple Gateway, which, through the energetic action of the London County Council, aided by the City authorities, was being secured in part at least, for the pleasure and instruction of our own and future generations. I do not propose merely to repeat that paper, though it will be convenient to quote extracts from it, but to place on record information which has since come to light, especially as regards the decorative plaster work, and the question as to whether it had once been the Prince of Wales' Council Chamber.

Records of the property before the building of the present house appear in the pamphlet entitled *Prince Henry's room, No. 17 Fleet Street* (2nd edition 1923), which is sold there on behalf of the London County Council, and contains much useful information. In 1589 a previous house on the site had been bought by one Zachary Bennett, who, dying in 1598, left it to his only son John. This John Bennett in July 1609 received a grant of the office of Sergeant-at-arms, and in June, 1610, applied to the authorities of the Inner Temple for leave to rebuild it. The terms of his application are given in the Inner Temple Records as follows<sup>1</sup>:—

<sup>1</sup> *Calendar of Inner Temple Records*, vol. ii, p. 51.

"Whereas John Bennett, one of the King's sergeants-at-arms, has petitioned that the Inner Temple Gate, in some vacation after a reading, may be stopped up for a month or six weeks in order that it may be rebuilt, together with his house called the *Prince's Arms*,<sup>1</sup> adjoining to and over the said gate and lane, and that he may jettie over the gate towards the street. Which building over the gate and lane will be in length from the street backwards 19 feet upon the ground, besides the "jettie" towards the street, which will be 2 feet 4 inches besides the window. And in consideration of the same being granted, the said Bennett promised to raise the gate and walls thereof to be in height 11 feet and in breadth 9 feet, and to make the same according to a plot under his hand, to make the gates new (he being allowed the old gates), and he will pave the street against the said house and gate."

Permission was then granted and the work was doubtless soon afterwards put in hand. This document therefore clearly shows the age of the present gatehouse, and the circumstances under which it was built, with its storeys "jettying" or jutting over the pavement in front. It also furnishes an explanation of the plumes of feathers outside and on the ceiling, and of the initials P.H. enclosed in a star shaped border, which apply to Henry, elder son of James I, Prince of Wales, and must have been placed there in compliment to him. Although it is true that, strictly speaking, a plume of feathers borne in a coronet represents the Prince's badge and not his arms, reason enough for their existence here is doubtless given by the fact, as appears from the above extract, of a house on this site called the *Prince's Arms*, having existed even before the building of the present structure. That a 17th century house has on it Royal Arms or badges is no proof of its having been connected with royalty. To go no further than Shoe Lane, Fleet

<sup>1</sup> Until houses were numbered in the 18th century they usually had signs.

Street. No 40, the headquarters of Messrs. Pontifex, engineers, stands on the site of the house called by Stow Oldbourne Hall, the history of which is obscure, but one can say with confidence that it was never owned by a royal person. In a room there, was a ceiling very like this; ornamented, in the words of Wilkinson's *Londinia Illustrata*, "with the arms and initials of James I in a star shaped border, his Queen, Anne of Denmark, and of Charles, Prince of Wales, crowned and surrounded by a garter," the date being 1617. Another example is on the ceiling of a room once part of Canonbury House, Islington, almost entirely rebuilt by Sir John Spencer, which has on it the Tudor arms and the date 1599.

There is, however, still a belief that the room on the first floor of the Inner Temple Gate House was originally the office and Council Chamber of the Duchy of Cornwall, which was held by Henry, Prince of Wales, elder son of James I, and the reason for this, apart from and in addition to the feathers and initials, is the fact that in various 17th century documents reference is made to a *Prince's Council Chamber in Fleet Street*. One with this heading appears in the *Calendar of State Papers* (vol. X, 1619-23), edited by Mrs. Green and Mr. Robert Lemon. It is an order of the Council of the Duchy of Cornwall, to the keepers of Brancepath, Raby and Barnard Castles, the date being February 25, 1619. A much later one is a proclamation, now at the Record Office, dated 1635, which runs thus: "Our pleasure is that those of our subjects who seek to have effective titles made good, shall before Hilary term next, repair to our now Commissioners at a house in Fleet Street (where our Commissioners for our Revenue while we were Prince of Wales did usually meet), where our now Commissioners will have their frequent meetings." Other such examples could be quoted from papers at the office of the Duchy of Cornwall and elsewhere.

What proof, however, is there that these references

can be connected with the room in the Inner Temple Gate House, though at first sight a belief in this seems natural enough? In the *Home Counties Magazine* article I had already given evidence that from 1615 onwards the Council of the Duchy of Cornwall transacted its affairs in various "hired leased or lent places," as a rule about Fleet Street, which was conveniently near the Inns of Court; I also pointed out that if before the advent of the Commonwealth the Duchy had possessed a house (its own freehold) for the purpose of transacting business, that house would have been sold by the Parliament (1646-1650) as King's or Prince's forfeited property, or at least would have been mentioned in the careful survey of the Duchy's possessions then made and still in existence, but there is no such mention.

Again, in the London County Council pamphlet, after allusion to the facts that the Charter of Livery of the Duchy of Cornwall to Prince Henry was dated 1 September, 1610,<sup>1</sup> that he died in November, 1612, and that between these dates there is no entry in the records of the Duchy to show where its business was then carried on; we are told that Charter of Livery to his brother Charles, who on his death became Duke of Cornwall, did not take place until 21 June, 1615. This means that in the intervening time the estate of the Duchy was administered on the King's account.

Finally, the writer gives his opinion as follows:—"On the whole the connection of the room with the Duchy of Cornwall cannot be regarded as more than possible. It hardly ranks as a probability." After further study of the subject, I feel that the word possible in this connection has reached a vanishing point.

Within the last few months I have visited the present office of the Duchy of Cornwall, and through the kindness of the authorities there I can now give an annotated list of the places where the Duchy was lodged for

<sup>1</sup> The eldest son of an English monarch is born Duke of Cornwall, but is created Prince of Wales, on his parents initiative.

many years after 1615. Until that year, from the time the gate house was rebuilt by John Bennett, no documentary evidence is forthcoming on the subject.

Some letters and warrants are dated from "Salisburie Court" (south of Fleet Street) between 1615 and 1619.

The Receiver-General's Declared Account of the Duchy for 1615-16 is issued from "Duchy House," that for 1616-17 was declared on 4th April 1618 at the "Counsell Chamber" in Fleet Street; it can now be shown where that chamber was. "Dutchie House" must surely have been Somerset House, sometime called Denmark House, in the Strand.

On 5th April 1617 the Council of the Duchy came to the conclusion that an office should be provided for them "either at my Lord of Salisbury or Essex House or in some other place, but my Lord of Salisburies house is thought most fitting."

However, on 4th July 1617, it was decided that "Master Hare's howse in Fleet Street" was to be taken. Master Hare seems to have died at this time, and the house was taken from his widow Margaret Hare, at a rent of £120 a year from Michaelmas 1617.

A letter of 21 October, 1622, gives Lady Mandeville's House in Fleet Street as the place then used by the Council.

From 1627 to 1640, and perhaps longer, the Council met at Mr. Currance's House, which was near the White Hart in Fleet Street. His christian name was Allen.

A letter is dated from H.M. Commission House in Fleet Street 24 June 1642, while one of 6 December 1642 comes from Boswell Court neire the Strand," presumably Boswell Court, Carey Street, cleared away for the Law Courts.

At the present office of the Duchy there is a transcript of a letter giving reasons why the Council Chamber should be near the Inns of Court ("namely for the ease of your Royal Highness's tenants, whose affairs are mostly transacted by attornies, who usually have their

residence thereabouts"). It mentions also that at one time a Council Chamber was appointed in Serjeants Inn.

So much for the question of Council Chambers in or near Fleet Street, used by the Duchy of Cornwall from 1615, say, to the time of the Commonwealth. We are not concerned with the signing of documents elsewhere.

Let us now turn our attention to the ceiling with the Prince of Wales' feathers and the letters P.H., to which reference has already been made. This is a fine example of the decorative plaster work of the time of John Bennett. I have a measured drawing of it by Mr. A. E. Bullock, and Mr. Roland W. Paul kindly gives me leave to reproduce his from his book called *Vanishing London*, published in 1894. He suggests that the original fireplace must have projected considerably more than the present one, which leaves an irregular plain space at the east end of the room. He mentions the motto, "Ich Dien" on a scroll below the feathers, and adds that when he did his drawing the plaster was elaborately coloured, but that the ornament had been much obliterated by repeated coats of paint. I painted a watercolour of the room in 1899 showing colour on the plasterwork, which is now in London Museum.

It appears that soon after the formation of the ceiling a row of six oblong plaster panels was added, extending along the south side of the room, the third from the east end having a shield of arms—a chevron between three tuns, which Mr. Roland Paul shows with the others on his plan. When he drew this the charges and border were gilt, the field being sable. It was the arms of the Vintners' Company, but, as Mr. Paul remarks in a private letter, they should be blazoned, sable, a chevron enarched between 3 tuns argent. These arms help materially in one's efforts to make out the history of the room. I mentioned them in the paper written for the *Home Counties Magazine*, vol. ii, 1900, but I did not then know the connection of the property with the Vintners. In November, 1610, only five months after

Bennett got leave to rebuild the house, it was sold to William Blake, citizen and vintner, who in all likelihood at once turned it into an inn, retaining the sign of the Prince's Arms. It is very doubtful if the rebuilding had been finished at the time of the Blake purchase, for in January, 1610-11, a petition as to rebuilding was addressed by him to the authorities of the Middle Temple exactly like that addressed by Bennett to the Inner Temple in June, 1910. Blake's petition was granted, though, as far as we are aware, the Middle Temple had no claims on the property. These are facts which cannot now be explained.

To quote from the London County Council pamphlet, "on 25th April, 1607, Blake sold the Prince's Arms to William Rolfe vintner, who in turn disposed of it to Ralph Massie vintner on 24th February, 1634-35. The next transfer took place on 8th September, 1671," when Massie's widow and son sold the freehold to James Sotheby, in whose family it remained until it was bought by the London County Council in 1900. We thus have a complete list of the successive owners from the time of John Bennett until now.

From the style of the added plasterwork and from the fact that William Blake was the first of the Vintners, whose successive ownership began in 1610, we may conclude that it was he who put up the arms. I am told that the lists of its early members were destroyed in the Great Fire. The house extended not only over the Inner Temple Lane, but some distance down the east side, where there was an entrance. It had as its sign the Prince's Arms, and was still so called in 1671, but was then more often known as the Fountain Tavern.

In 1665 Monsieur Angiers advertised his remedies for stopping the plague, to be had at the Fountain Tavern, Inner Temple Lane, down the passage. As late, however, as 1731 the original sign was still mentioned. In July of that year Mr. James Sotheby renewed an agreement with the Treasurer of the Temple in the

following words: "I am content to pay 2s. 6d. per annum to the Society for the privilege of the lights belonging to the *Princes Arms or Fountain Tavern* looking or opening into the Inner Temple Lane, and promise to make good the shops under or near the Inner Temple Gate, if damaged by my repairing the said tavern. I do also agree that the best room of the said house" (that is the room with the ceiling) "shall be from time to time set apart for the use of the masters of the said society on public shows or occasions, as long as and whenever the said house is used as a tavern or public-house, so long as two days' notice be given for setting apart such room, to the tenant or occupier of the said house."

I will not attempt to describe the later vicissitudes of the Inner Temple Gate House. What is further known about it can be gleaned to a great extent from the Inner Temple Records, the L.C.C. pamphlet, my own article in the *Home Counties Magazine* and various other writings. An interesting tale is that of the occupation of the front part, including the room on the first floor, by the wax-works associated with the name of Mrs. Salmon, who had died long before (it was then really Mrs. Clark's), which crossed from the opposite side of the road in 1795 and remained there till about 1815.

I will now revert to the subject of the decorated ceiling in the room called Prince Henry's room. After its purchase by the London County Council, until which time it had been occupied for many years by a hairdresser, the modelling of the plaster work having been obscured by paint, and in the words of the L.C.C. pamphlet, "having generally suffered from the sagging of the timbers to which it was attached," it was taken down in sections and "at South Kensington Museum was cleaned and straightened," being afterwards refixed. The work was done by Mr. L. Guintini, who was then living in Putney. Unfortunately during the process of restoration, or before it, the oblong panel on the south



side which contained the relief of the Vintners' Arms was hopelessly damaged, and as this and the other five evidently did not form part of the original design, he decided not to replace them. A cast of the arms, however, had been previously taken, and a reproduction of this came into my hands, which after many years I am now able to exhibit. I think those who see it will agree with me that although the cast is lop sided, as it does not include the whole of the original design on the left-hand side, it is both decorative and of historical interest. I do not know of another copy, and I hope it will soon find its way into a public museum.

Besides the lantern slide of the Vintners' Arms, from a drawing by Mr. Roland, I exhibit one from his plan of the ceiling, another of the ceiling formerly in Oldburne Hall, Shoe Lane, to prove their great resemblance, and another from a drawing by my friend Mr. Hanslip Fletcher, 1899, which though not so good as the work he is now doing, shows distinctly the panels with the Vintners' Arms, and the appearance of the room when it was used as a barber's shop. I should add, perhaps, that the small pieces of decorative plaster-work, now appearing in the room above the windows, were not known to exist until the false front of the house was removed by the London County Council, the windows being reconstructed as they were originally. The ground storey of the building was then set back about 5 feet, for the purpose of widening Fleet Street. This included the arch into Inner Temple Lane. On the removal of the accumulated paint from it, the date (1748) and the initials of the then treasurer came to light on the key-stone. This perhaps shows a repair; the style of the stone work looks, to my eyes, Jacobean. The staircase leading to the room with the plaster ceiling, and the two storeys above is pronounced by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments to be "of mid to late 17th century date, though repaired and restored," the material being deal.

I have not referred to the picturesque accounts in Peter Cunningham's *Handbook of London*, Wheatley's *London Past and Present*, and elsewhere, placing Nando's Coffee-house at the east corner of the Inner Temple Lane, that is, at No. 17 Fleet Street, as an article in *Notes and Queries*, with measured plan, 5 July, 1930, prove conclusively that this was further to the west.

My thanks are due to Sir Walter Peacock, K.C.V.O., and other officials of the Duchy of Cornwall, to the librarians at the Inner and Middle Temple, to Mr. Roland W. Paul, and to Mr. Hanslip Fletcher. I also apologise to the writer of the L.C.C. pamphlet on No. 17 Fleet Street, a proof how much I appreciate his work.